

Yellowstone Cutthroat Restoration Project Landowner Incentive Program

The Yellowstone cutthroat restoration project / landowner incentive program was initiated in 2003 to coordinate efforts to protect, restore and enhance YCT populations and their habitats located on private lands throughout their native range in southwest Montana.

The primary objectives of the program are to provide technical assistance to private landowners who voluntarily seek to protect, restore, and enhance Yellowstone cutthroat habitat on their lands; and to assist private landowners with development of restoration projects, acquisition of funds necessary to complete projects, and oversight of project construction and monitoring. Projects may include riparian fencing and off-stream water development; stream channel restoration; removal of migration barriers and screening of irrigation diversions; water conservation; and removal of non-native competitors.



A reach of Emigrant Spring Creek before and after restoration. The channel was narrowed and deepened to facilitate sediment transport and improve fish habitat.

Since inception of the program in 2003, technical assistance has been provided to more than 40 landowners resulting in 4 completed protects, 7 ongoing projects, and 16 likely projects that remain in the planning stages. To date, over \$300,000 in grant funds has been secured for completion of restoration work.

Montana Sagebrush Initiative – Helping Ranchers Conserve Critical Habitat Landowner Incentive Program

Montana supports some of the largest remaining tracts of privately owned greater sage grouse habitat in the west, representing some of the highest sage grouse densities. These habitats support 53 wildlife species of which 8 require sagebrush for survival.

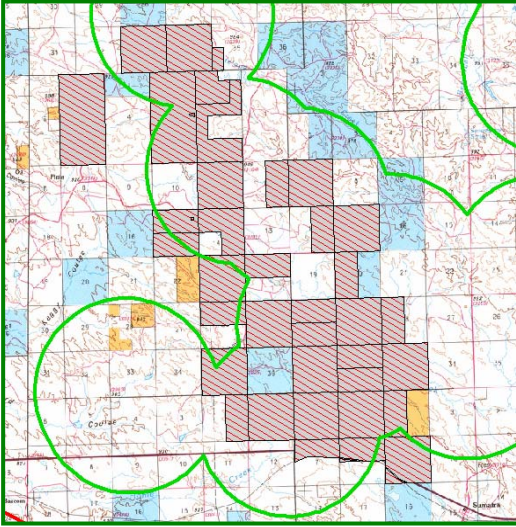
Long-term population declines of sage grouse and other sagebrush obligates have largely resulted from habitat fragmentation and conversion. Each year considerable acreages of privately owned sagebrush grasslands in Montana are plowed, converted to cropland, or treated to reduce sagebrush. Sustaining sagebrush obligates like sage grouse and sage thrashers requires maintaining large tracts of native sagebrush habitats. This fits well with traditional ranching operations.



High quality sagebrush grassland habitat enrolled in the Montana Sagebrush Initiative.

The Montana Sagebrush Initiative has been an effective incentive tool for owners of *high priority* tracts of sagebrush habitat. The program provides landowners with a one-time payment of \$12/acre for a 30-year commitment to not spray, burn, or plow

sagebrush grasslands. These term leases are funded with federal Landowner Incentive Program and matching state Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program funds.



A 17,000-acre Montana Sagebrush Initiative lease (cross-hatched area). The rounded polygon represents priority 1 areas.

To assure funds are spent in an equitable manner, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MFWP) established a 3-tiered priority map of privately owned sagebrush habitat that is based on location of sage grouse leks, sage grouse density, land ownership patterns, and other criteria. Each prospective property for enrollment is field-mapped to assure high quality sagebrush habitats with considerable use by sage grouse are funded.

To date, 23 landowners have enrolled over 130,000 acres of prioritized habitats, with an additional 60,000 acres pending. MFWP is geared up for enrolling additional properties as LIP funds become available.